

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA. Expanded, revised edition. By Chandler S. Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert S. Zim. Golden Press, New York, New York, 1983:360 pp., many colored paintings and range maps. \$10.95 (hardbound), \$7.95 (limpbound).—The “Robbins” guide hardly needs any introduction for the present-day birdwatcher. Since its first publication in 1966 it has earned a well-merited popularity with most birders. A revised edition, now at hand, is most welcome. It made its appearance three years after the revised edition of its major competitor and at a time when two new guides also became available.

Veteran users of the guide will find little change in the present edition. The new book is printed on a different grade of paper that results in greater clarity and more faithful reproduction of the figures. Most of the paintings have not been redone, but from the excellence of the reproduction I suspect that new plates were made from them. In some cases individual bird figures have been rearranged and some new species have been inserted into the old plates. There are 10 totally new plates that figure the exotic parrots now established in Florida and California, several of the Eurasian pipsits that are almost regular along the West Coast, and a number of other Eurasian species that now occur in Alaska. I have not attempted to count the new species added in this edition, but I note that two—Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) and Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*)—have been eliminated. The former has not appeared in Arizona for many years, and indeed, may be extinct, while the introduced Florida population of the tanager has apparently died out.

The textual material has had only minor changes, a testimony to the accuracy of the earlier edition. A few corrections and additions have been made to the identification clues. Nomenclature follows the 6th edition of the A.O.U. Check-list (1983), but the arrangement of species in the book is essentially as it was in the older edition. However, the Table of Contents is arranged according to the 1983 classification.

A distinct improvement from the earlier edition is that the range maps are not only clearer and easier to read, but they are not all drawn on the same basic map. Species with limited distribution have somewhat larger maps. No political boundaries are shown on these maps, which makes for some difficulty in interpretation. All of the maps have been redrawn to represent current knowledge of the ranges.

Vocalizations are again mostly illustrated by sonagrams, which are helpful to some people but not to others. The description of the songs in the text are usually not very useful.

In the review copy, the color reproduction seems to be better than in my copies of the original edition, and only two plates seem to be out of register. The only fault I find with the color is that the shade of green used gives the wrong impression of the true colors of the *Empidonax* flycatchers and the fall warblers. In fact, I do not care for Arthur Singer's plates of the fall warblers at all. Not many people unfamiliar with the species could identify the fall Blackpoll from his figure. Of the guides currently available the National Geographic Society Guide has the best, albeit flawed, portraits of the fall warblers. Is there a market for a specialized guide for the fall warblers, and if so, are there an author and an artist willing to do it?

In summary, this edition continues the fine precedent set by the original, and those people who have “grown up” using “Robbins,” as well as newcomers to the birding fraternity, will enjoy the book and will profit from its use.—GEORGE A. HALL.